

Benton judge candidates say they are ready for job

By Pratik Joshi, Herald staff writer

The two candidates in the Benton County District Judge Position 4 race are touting their experience.

Judge Joe Burrowes and Dave Petersen want voters to evaluate their legal and judicial credentials -- details of which are posted on their websites -- before making a decision.

"My legal and judicial experience far exceeds my opponent's," said Burrowes, who was appointed to the district judge position in September 2009.

Prior to his appointment to the District Court, Burrowes served as a court commissioner and a judge pro tem. "I have a proven and successful track record that voters can measure," he said, adding that he has handled thousands of civil and criminal cases.

The Gonzaga Law School graduate highlights his 24 years of public service, including 15 years as a Hanford patrol officer. He worked as a Benton County prosecutor in 2002 and as city attorney for Pasco and Benton City from 2004-05. Later, he practiced as a felony criminal and defense attorney in the Tri-Cities until he became a court commissioner in June 2007.

"We need to balance the system in place to reduce costs," Burrowes said in response to a Herald question about judges' responsibility to reduce costs while maintaining or improving access to justice. That means those convicted of crimes should serve on work crews and work release programs instead of being in jail, he explained.

Benton County District Court already has an online fine payment system, and it also allows individuals to mitigate traffic tickets by mail, Burrowes said. "We need to look at comparable systems and make the court more efficient."

Petersen's response to the same question was: "A judge needs to be aware that putting people in jail costs a lot of money. Making them work it off on the work crew is less costly and provides a sense of giving back to the community."

But he added some people need to be sent to jail.

Petersen said he's a better candidate. "My legal experience is longer and broader than my opponent's," Petersen said.

He also cited personal integrity and support for family values as his special qualities.

Petersen, a graduate of Thurgood Marshall School of Law in Houston, started his legal career as a deputy prosecutor for Franklin County in 1997. He started private practice in 1999 and has dealt with criminal defense, civil and family law and business issues. He was appointed a judge pro tem in 2000 in the Tri-Cities.

On the net: judgejoeburrowes.com and daveforjudge.com

Read more: <http://www.tri-cityherald.com/2010/10/22/1220174/benton-judge-candidates-say-they.html#ixzz13OXrssfb>